



**SAVOIR
FAIRE**
Vol. 58

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WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE TO

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THAT HAVE MADE THIS MAGAZINE POSSIBLE**



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SAVOIR FAIRE

A literary & visual arts magazine



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(Cover Art by Lauren Davidson)

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Savoir Faire is Bossier Parish Community College's annual literary and visual art magazine. Its mission is to showcase the exemplary creative talents of BPCC's students and to share their work with our larger community. Works are judged anonymously by BPCC's faculty and are selected based on their creativity and artistic merit.

We are enormously proud of our student contributors this year and believe their work is a testament to the creative capability of BPCC's larger student body and the excellence of the instruction they receive in their coursework. Congratulations to all of the newly-published artists!

- Katie Bickham & John Wagoner, Co-editors

AWARDS

LITERARY ART

First Place - *Dark Angels*, Ashlyn Waln

Honorable Mention - *The Party*, Chris Gonzales

Honorable Mention - *Oh Mother*, William McCullough

VISUAL ART

First Place - *Untitled*, Noel Elias

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POETRY

ENCOUNTERS

by Latisha Abrams

Who are you to me but that
Wind blowing in from the West
Comforting my soul, changing scenery
Everywhere you go.

Who are you to me but that
Voice that shadows over me
Knocking me down, telling me, commanding me that
I am nothing at all.

Who are you to me but
The narcissism that I see scrolling down a timeline
With nothing but rebellion and ambition
on your mind.

Who are you to me but the
Figure I hold near and dear to and inspire to be. So that
I know my existence is not pure waste
But a chance.

Who are you to me but a
Trouble of the past. Who taught me so much
about myself but was not
worth the lesson.

Who are you to me but the
Worries of my mind at night. When all I see is
Your future and what the world could
Offer something so fragile.

Who are you to me but the
Excuse that buckles me into the seat when
I pass my stop. Just riding on into “what if”.

Who are you to me is what
I can not understand.
If you have an answer...
Let me know.



HEY LITTLE WANTON

by Timothy Monroe

Hey little wanton so tall and lean
There is something you must do for me.

What is it shall I do for you
That would make me calm and serene.

Well little wanton you must do this
And you must do that.

But the day has just begun,
I must run and play before the
Break of day.

No! Little wanton so tall and lean
You must stay and do this for me.

I will not! The day has called and I must answer.
There is no other call I will answer. So, I will go,
let me be other than to be wanton free.



MY HEART'S SOLITUDE

by Cassandra Martin

If my heart's solitude had lips,
It would speak to the trillion cells choreographed in your body
Just to remind them how loved they are,
And kiss them till they exhaled my warmth and vibrated eagerness
If my heart had fingertips, I would run them across the map inside of me,
And show you all the galaxies you occupy and enter them
Just to show you, I occupy yours too
In my heart's solitude, is where tectonic plates separate and shake me
Awake
Then my heart is exposed and this sea inside of me is crashing against rocks
Like liquid fire
I overflow,
Flooding the shores of all answers
Letting myself dive in these waters with raging tides and soft streams
I've overcome my fears this way and its depth is electrifying
But I still come up to breathe
Life carries me like this,
In its shallowness where laughter and lilies wade
It's in these quiet moments that I find volcanic ash on my skin,
Sometimes stained in creases overlapping cracks where the light is meant
To get in,
My heart's stillness is a home that transforms in welcomes,
So come here and we will sit in wordless matrimony
But our marriage is written in sand
instead of stone,
Cause feelings can't be shaped into characters
Their desire for freedom transcends
escape,
They shatter into infinite particles and expand
into parallel worlds
In those worlds, birth wings to fly to all of them
in timeless space
Because labels are too small and vain,
Too solid and stubborn

Too certain and too closed
For the soul's scripture
And this is why we surrender to silence
Unspoken feeling knows the purity
of life's mystery



ABLEISM

by Crystal Bordelon

So what, I can walk?
I guess limping is just a ruse.

So what, I want a wheelchair?
It's better than slowing you down.

Stop glaring at me in that tone of voice
You know the one, so quit it.

Your song and dance that you think helps
Just tramples everything I've ever fought for.

Oh I'm sorry that you seem to know
My limits more than I do.

You caught me, I can't do it
But apparently I can.

The songs of weeping, popping, and cringing
Are yet to be heard to your deaf ears.

My spine is not your backbone
So stop treating it like one.

Your diagnosis isn't my solution
You're not even a doctor.

My pain is not your suffering
So stop comparing it to yours.

The amount of times I limp are more
Than the amount of times you've eaten.

That next time, when you want to judge me
For my choices that don't even affect you.

“Don't complain, I have it worse than you,”
Is not going to cut it, buddy.

Maybe you'll understand better that if I remember you
I'll thank you for the lack of decency and support.

Don't dare judge a life
You've never even felt.



IMPELLED BY A DREAM

by Jalisa Craft

Like a boat tossed about on a stormy sea
A young black man
Full of strength, full of hope
Strong and brave yet feeling not so free

Marching and trotting the streets
Crying out for peace
Teaching right from wrong
Preaching love instead of hate

Men come like thieves in the night
Trying to rob him of beliefs and dignity
But not without a fight
Not with a fist, gun, or weapon
But with the power of words
True spoken words

Giving in or giving up is not an option
That would be too easy
Hoping the sweat, blood, and tears is not in vain
Living with the dream of one day being united in this land
We join as one to bring about change
Letting ones ambitions become reality



THE HUNT

by Palei Escobar

Rhythmic beat of native drum
Erie cries of the hunts delight
Shadows flicker in tribal flame
They're out to hurt the beast again.
Dust is scattered 'neath their feet.
The Hunters dance, so captivating,
Painted faces, demonic screams
Thirst for blood to run in streams.
Silence, soon it shall begin.
Hunters suspended in animation
Finally they're off, spears held high
Fearless warriors owning the night



FROM THE LENS I SEE

by Rachel Criswell

Since childhood you became a third parent
Nurturing my adolescent mind.
If not for you my eyes would be closed and dark.
Blaring through the darkness of the box you lit many ways.

Speaking through many voices and shapes, innumerably,
Your omnipotent gaze intent on the enrapturing of your viewers.
Every student packed together to see and hear your sight,
Together, we each journey apart.

You divined portals to realms, known and unknown
Guiding me through great journeys familiar and new.
The ambrosia of these projections are heady
Leaving me engorged and unsatisfied, needing more.

The magic you wield is marvelous and terrifying.
Your illumination has become forever trapped within me.
I yearn, to be a part of you,
Desperate to somehow become involved in your pictures.



I AM ALWAYS BROUGHT BACK TO YOU

by Hayden Thorn

I am always brought back to you
No matter how long it has been.
My mind soars with thoughts
Of the joy you bring
Then to the pain I collect.

Tracks of my devotion
Leave lasting wounds
Hidden behind your love.
You appear when I need you the most
But want you the least

When you are here
Your love is injected
Into my heart.
And when you are gone
I shiver, longing for your return.



LAST MAY

by Hayden Thorn

Time will take me
Far, far away
From a grasp
That makes me stay

The space we hold
Is quite gray
Some might think
I'm your prey

But I'm a survivor
That, I'll say.
You won't have control
I will make you pay

This story is mine
To tell on this day

Of the evils you committed
Committed last May.



FEAR (AFTER ANNE SEXTON'S "COURAGE")

by Nico Scholl

It strikes us at the worst of times.
A child's first dreams,
As terrifying as a never-ending labyrinth.
The first time you were home alone,
Scared to leave from under your blanket.
The first time you panic out at night,
As you miss curfew.
When you hear howls and shrieks,
Or squeals or cracks or screeches,
And your neck hair sends a prickling shiver down your spine,
You wallowed in those spoofs,
And let them haunt you.

Later,
If you faced the horrors of demons and ghosts,
You did not do so with a willing mind,
You did so with a shivering scream to
Save your soul.
You did not reach for the strength inside you,
Though it was there.
Your fear was a caged bird,
Thrumming its wings, dreaming of escape.
If your mind awoke you,
And saved you from certain death,
Then your fear was not fear,
It was sleep: sleep as simple as snow.
Later,
If you have endured a grave encounter,
Then you did so willingly,
Self-aware of true and false,
Never doubting your conscience,
Like a river flows surely to the sea.
Next, my kinsman, you empowered your courage,
You held it on a pedestal,

And then you cheered for it
And after it was praised
It stepped down to a blossoming mind
And was reformed.

Later,
When you face the greatest terror of them all,
Your fear will spring traps as you fight a losing battle,
Each night becomes another horror,
Those you love will try to ease your mind,
But no amount of love can overcome the frightened thought of darkness,
And at the last moment
When death grabs you by the throat
You'll remember the courage you have built
And smirk at his hood covered abyss.



OH! TO BE FELINE

by Jessica Hall

Oh! To be a cat
And not have to worry-
Just be apathetic and fat
Without creating a flurry.

I would loll in the brilliance of day
Nibbling snacks to my heart's delight.
I'd be clever, surely, and get my way
And feign ignorance of wrong and right.

I wouldn't give a left sock
About your couch or your shades-
I'd leave my John Hancock
With my ten little blades

You'll assume you're the chief
Which is ordinarily fair
But a moment of brief
Cuteness shapes my human au pair

It would be *purrrr*fectly fine!
Indulging in catnip-
Letting time slip-
Just being lazily feline.



OH MOTHER

by William McCullough

She awakens early and applies her makeup.
Although, her concealer is superfluous,
because even caked on it is not waterproof.
He sits there, but he does not exist anymore.
Seven days a week is wearing her thin.

We can both see that she is only a shadow
of the woman she was, but what can we do?
We lend her our hands for support,
but we are not enough to pull her up.
Oh mother please, help us help you.
Her eyes so crimson and watery
are not irritated by a liner.
It's the brightness of his LCD
that's darkening her soul.
I love you, but I am not enough.



ANOTHER DAY (AFTER STEPHEN DUNN'S "A POSTMORTEM GUIDE")

by Lynsie Moore

To my Eulogist: Take this into account when you tell of my life.

If the room is brimming
stocked of a somber swarm,
Take a look at the casket
And shamefully tread out.
No doubt dear eulogist
You've stumbled upon the wrong room.

Not being versed well
In the ways of conversation
Have often left me friendless
I do not predict a large gathering

For those that do come,
Open with a joke.
"Knock knock."
"Who's there?"
Not me.
I predict that joke to kill.
But should no one laugh, continue on
My jokes were never very witty.
On another note
If you can be bothered
Tell those I love
My life was complete
Do not mention
My discontent
Of a life well wasted.
Am I going to fast?

If you will permit-
Let me start fresh.
Create a fabrication
Blatant in its falsity
I do not care what story you tell
As long as it is not my own

In truth.
I'm terribly timid
Hate the attention
And I've hidden this fact fairly well.

In life, I steeled my empathy
Grasped my resolve
And bit my tongue through hardships

But if I were to be honest

I achieved very little-
And hid behind my facade
That states I'm more than myself.
I have never been as brave as I am perceived.
I just cringe at my doubts being known.

So, if you will- I do hope you agree
Let me take my weakness along with me.
Do not extinguish the illusion
I've spent years to create
Let my memory be of how I lived

After all-
It's just another day.



THE GAME OF LIFE

by Alexander Cocherell

Within the complex make of things,
It all comes down to this:

0's and 1's,
Ons and Offs,

Yes and No's,
Go's and Stops'.

These cosmic choices chance our lives,
The paths we take
(Our taste in pies),

But let us not always be so quick,
To right up conclusive arithmetics.

Some odds are destined,
Fixed and set,
But to others, I say, we must take the bet!

Run the risks, on the fly.
You grab the coins;
I'll grab the die.
Weighted down,
Double Grinned,
It's time to let the games begin!

None the wiser of where we came,
Who are,
Or what's our name.

Stares and gasps,
And wallets clasps
gawk and whisper as we pass.

Golden moments catch our eyes
Smiling, waltzing, and saying goodbye.

Our pockets loaded down with treasure,
The vaults of life drained of pleasure.

We took our chances,
We sought the high,
We stretched out our limbs
And we wrought the sky.

Snitch in hand, two souls grown rich
They'll turn and ask "What trick is this?"

We'll laugh and chuckle at each other,
As eyebrows peer,
Lost and stuttered.

We'll have our fun,
We'll play the part,
And respond, delighted, in retort

"Whose to say that life is won
through lucky turnings of the sun?"
"We're filthy rich in mind and heart
'Cause we rigged the game up from the start".



ENDLESS WINTER

by Brittany Wile

No matter how hard I try
The rose still blooms
Even in the intoxicating cold
The fire still fumes

As the petals grow a deeper red
This endless winter leaves me further lost in my head
I wonder if spring comes
Will the petals finally wither and die
Or will this blossoming flower forever be my burden to bear?
How much harder can I try?

Shaking hands, a heart full of doubts
Yet this flower is just as bright
When you forget me
As when you hold me tight
Will this ever die
Or unlike the rose-
Will I?

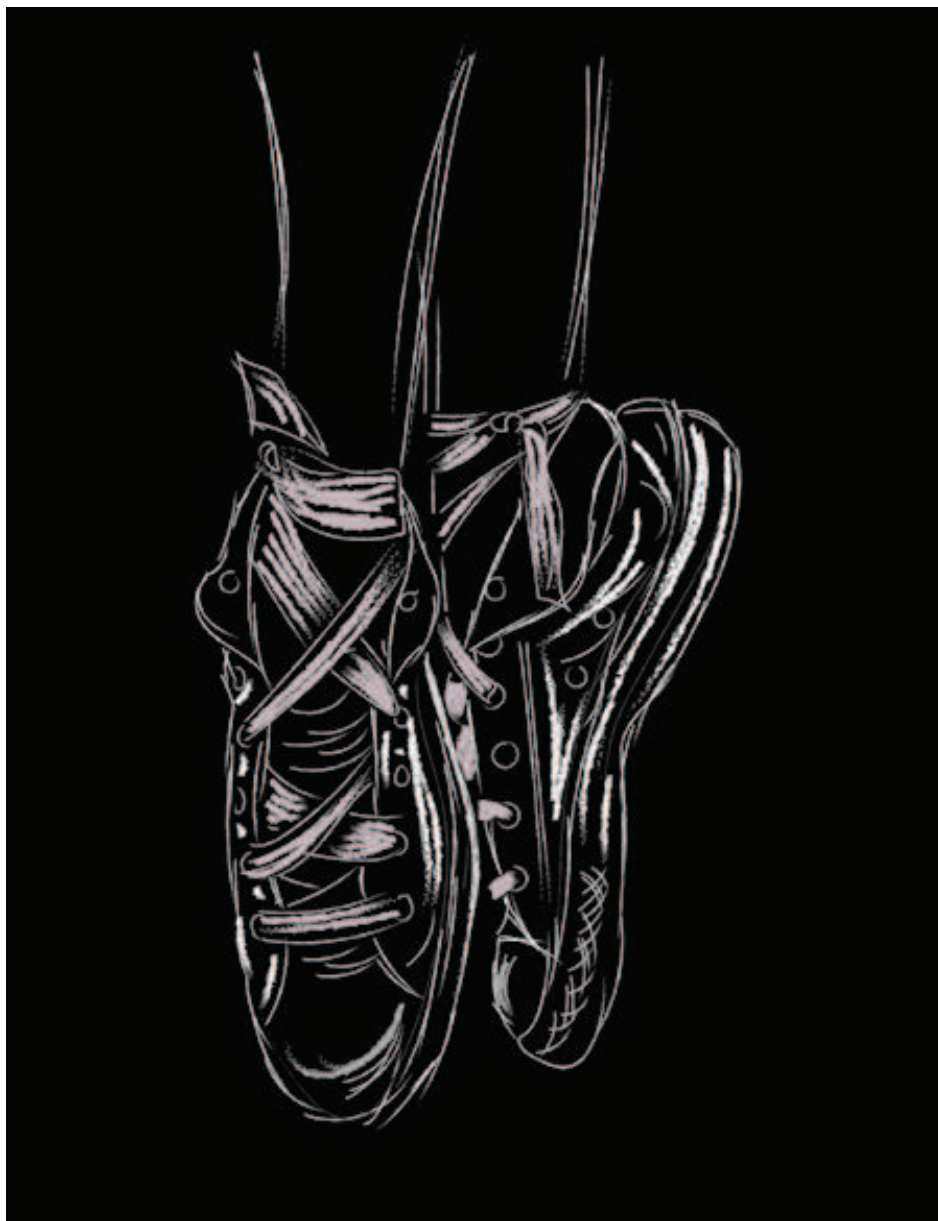
Even this raging summer feels frigid against my skin
This rose still burns a hole in my chest
Only, Goosebumps litter my body once again
Inside, I am hidden
Withered and frost bitten
A bitter reminder-
Of this endless winter



ARTWORK

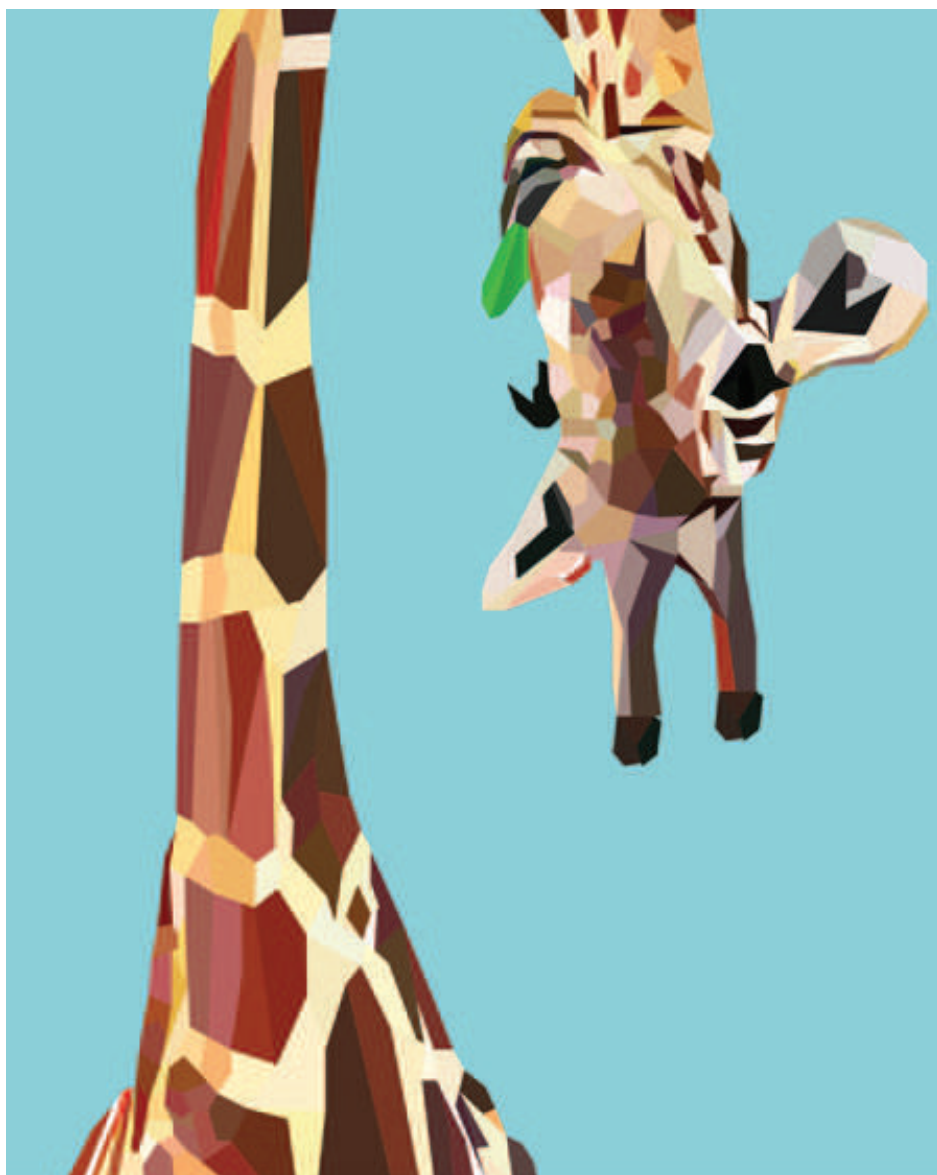
CHANCE

by Lauren Davidson



HAPPY DAY

by Lauren Davidson



IN THOUGHT

by Lauren Davidson



BURNT TRUNKS AND NEW MOSS

by Tami Miles



THE ROSE

by Tami Miles



BRIDGE

by Misty Swan



FUEL

by Misty Swan



WATERFALL

by Misty Swan



RAINBOW

by Misty Swan



BRANDON

by Isaiah Mayo



PINEAPPLE AT REST

by Jessica McCarty



SOCK MONKEY

by Caitlin Simcox



CHUCK CLOSE COPY

by Caitlin Simcox



PEWDIEPIE

by Kyri Rayfield



VAN GOGH WHEATFIELD WITH CYPRESS COPY

by Jennifer Tate



UNTITLED

by Noel Elias



PROSE

THE BEACH

by Patty Scott

Looking out of a partially opened Bay window, there are mounds and mounds of sand that stands shoulder to shoulder. The aqua blue waters melts into the deep blue sky as if they are one. The heat of the sun lends itself to the beach lovers that lie underneath it, in hopes of dressing themselves with its warmth. The beach possesses a beauty that welcomes people with open arms. The people, the cool crisp waters, and the warm sand beckons them to return.

There is a smell of gasoline, from the line of smokey cars that can be seen for miles and miles away. As people hurry to claim their spot of heaven on the beach, there are children screaming uncontrollably with excitement, as they near their destination. There are always many families on the beach, and a vendor nearby. The smell of hamburgers, fried chicken, pizza pie, and hot buttered popcorn, is sure to guide them to the food stand that is adorned with many colors of the rainbow. College students call it, “Home of their Spring Break”, because they will always visit time and time again.

The beach offers a wonderful smell of freshness, from the large tides as they roll in one after another. Looking out at the water, it seems as if many tiny diamonds has been perfectly scattered about. As the sun shines directly upon the water, a really bright shimmering light presents itself. Sometimes there is a stillness, and the water will seem very peaceful. As people frolick along the outer edges of the calm waters, angry sea creatures are sure to make their

presence known, and remind the beach goers that the beach is their home, and everyone else is just a visitor.

Stepping onto the beach, most people will say it feels as if they are walking on soft carpet made of sand. Whenever a sand castle is built, it was amazing to see that the tiny grains can hold their form perfectly. There are many hidden treasures waiting to be discovered underneath this very mysterious, but beautiful part of the earth. Pebbles of all shapes, colors, and sizes are usually found. The sand harbors beautiful seashells that displays a smooth silky surface, with the colors of fine pearls.

The beach possesses a beauty that welcomes people with open arms. The people, the cool crisp waters, and the warm sands beckons them to come back again and again. The aqua blue waters melts into the sky as if they are one. With every step, the plushness of the warm sand gives comfort to the feet. The beach is wonderful place to visit, and a very, very, relaxing experience.



A HERO IN THE HALL OF FAITH

by Rachel Stephens

The odds were against her from birth. She was a poor, country girl who labored alongside her mother and seven older siblings in the cotton fields to make ends meet. Though the beginning of her life was meager, the ending was great. Christopher Reeve once said, “A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.” Joseph Campbell stated, “A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” Wanda Gail Carroll was a hero. No, her name was not written in the headlines of the paper or broadcasted during the evening news – but all of Heaven knew her name. At sixty-five years old, with a crown of white hair, she had reached the sunset of her life. It was clear that the decades of strenuous work and burdens of life had taken their toll on her aging body; however, these things never touched her spirit. For friends, she was an endless source of wisdom and encouragement. To church and family members, she was the epitome of a virtuous woman; for the hopeless and addicted, she was a pipeline of love and hope. Zechariah 4:13 declares, “Do not despise small beginnings.” This remarkable, godly lady overcame poverty and abuse, endured loss and addiction, and remained faithful through an intense battle with cancer, by the power of God and prayer.

Through the old screen door, Wanda watched in horror as the man she called, “Daddy,” chased her mother through the cotton fields. As a little girl, she dwelled in a continuous war of light and darkness. During the day, she heard the soft, gentle voice of her praying mother; however, evenings were full of the violent, drunken

rages and profanity-laced outbursts of her bitter, alcoholic father. She wrestled with the fear of what each new day would bring. Her only refuge was the small church, a few miles away, which provided a haven of safety and peace. Although each trip to church brought her mother another beating, it did not stop them from being faithful to every service. At thirteen, Wanda had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ; she repented of her sins and a few weeks later, received the infilling of the Spirit of God. That moment marked the point she was permanently changed. Her mother became her daily example of a righteous woman, who remained kind and compassionate towards her children and prayed in the fields while she worked or secretly in the family's tiny outhouse. Through those years, Wanda learned the art of prayer and received complete deliverance from fear. Because her mother had a sixth grade education and was limited in her ability to teach her children, it became Wanda's cherished belief that children catch more than they are taught. Indeed, she caught her mother's passion for the Word of God, devotion to prayer, and unwavering faith. Several years later, Wanda applied for a position with the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office in Louisiana. In order to be hired, she was required to undergo a routine psychological evaluation. Astonishingly, the results revealed an emotionally whole and mentally stable individual. This was considered extremely rare due to the abuse and alcoholism rampant in her childhood. The psychologist asked, "Why are your results like this? You should not be functioning or at least functioning abnormally!" Wanda replied, "Sir, I simply learned how to pray." She was hired on the spot.

At the tender age of eighteen, Wanda married. She loved teaching Sunday school and was actively involved in ladies ministry, where she contributed mouthwatering, homemade dishes to

raise mission funds. Soon, she was expecting a baby boy; however, shortly after giving birth, he passed away. This was followed by a miscarriage when the young couple tried again to have a child. In the midst of heartbreak, Wanda found healing and renewed faith through the Word of God. Eventually, she gave birth to three healthy baby boys. As her sons grew older, Wanda consecrated herself to greater amounts of Bible study and intense prayer. Four o'clock every morning, she rose to intercede in prayer for the souls of her city, church, and family. When her middle son, Shawn, developed a drug addiction, she fought for him on her knees in prayer. Shawn came close to death many times as he plunged deeper into the drug world; however, it was later discovered that during those critical moments, Wanda had felt an urgent pull to cry out in prayer for her son. Twenty years later, Shawn was miraculously delivered from meth and alcohol addiction, as he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Because of her personal experience with alcoholism and drugs, Wanda became burdened to see the addicted made free by the power of God. She devoted the final eleven years of her life to jail ministry. Weekly, she drove to the Bossier Maximum Security Facility in Plain Dealing, Louisiana, where she taught the Alcohol Chemical Treatment Series and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, hundreds of women bound by addiction found restoration and lasting freedom. Her son, Shawn, caught the example of his godly mother and became involved in jail ministry through his church.

The diagnosis of stage four cancer sends most people spiraling into a state of anxiety and depression. Wanda was never like most people. On a hot, summer day in 2011, she received the shocking news. Her immediate response was simple: she would choose to trust God. Although she firmly believed in divine heal-

ing, her faith did not falter as the cancer worsened. She did not wallow in self-pity or despair, in spite of severe nausea and pain, which accompanied chemotherapy and radiation. When prayer meetings and church could not be attended due to excruciating pain, the well-worn pages of her Bibles could be found open in every room of her home. Hours were spent meditating on scripture, listening to sermons, and discovering new ways to bless the people she loved most. When Wanda's pastor came to visit and encourage her, he left encouraged and carried home a sack of potatoes and greens she gave him from her prized backyard garden. When the church gave her an anointed, prayer blanket that she deeply treasured, she did not hesitate to send it to an ailing friend. Eventually, Wanda was admitted into the Grace Home, a hospice care center in Shreveport, Louisiana. While bedridden, she offered to teach a bible study to Janet, one of the nurses. Janet now attends the church Wanda once did. Even though cervical cancer took Wanda's life, it could not destroy the faith she held so dearly. Wanda once said, "If it is my time to go home, I am ready. I just want to be faithful to the end." Surrounded by her sons, daughter-in-laws, and grandchildren, Wanda took her last breath June 28, 2014. The family wept tears of sorrow and joy and felt deep peace, as the sweet presence of the Lord filled the room. "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus," was the powerful, timely hymn sung at her funeral, as countless former drug addicts, nurses, pastors, friends, and family paid their last respects. She had fought a good fight, finished her course, and kept the faith.

Heroes do not always receive or desire a spotlight. Wanda did not crave the attention or applause of this world; she lived for an audience of one. Although she was dealt a hard hand in life, Wanda refused the attitude of a victim and chose the path of a

victor. Each obstacle she faced became a stepping stone to draw closer to the one she loved most, her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through prayer and faith, she overcame the abuse and tremendous trials and became a powerful, positive influence to others. The heritage she left behind is unique and special to those who knew her. Discovered on the wall of her home were sticky notes with scriptures and reminders to pray for various people. One sticky note stood out from the rest. Scribbled on it were these words: "My fight is to live righteous in an unrighteous world." She succeeded. Wanda is a hero in the hall of faith.



THE MISTER

by Jalisa Craft

I hate my friend for introducing me to you. You were smooth and sweet. You had me trapped like a car submerged with someone inside. No matter how hard I forced myself away from you, I couldn't resist. It seemed like everywhere I went, you were there. I let you inside me and like that, you were gone. I tried to resist you, but I would always give in. You were my weakness; I didn't care because you always left me satisfied. My mom always said you were no good for me. I never listened. Many had you, but I despised the fact my friend had you first. When I would come around with you she'd say, "I sure would like some more of that!"

After thinking about it, how could I be furious at her? After all she is how I found you, Mr. Goodbar.



FLY ME TO THE MOON

by Rachel Criswell

Of all the places in the universe I see them in a Walmart. Two girls cling to each other sharing a smile, sharing a look. I stare across the aisle. It feels intimate observing this twinkle of their odyssey. I cannot help my smile. My heart flickers with warmth. I marvel at this brave spectacle for all the people of Walmart to behold. Stars blaze in my eyes. I find myself charged with longing. One day I will find someone. That one who makes me happy and I make them happy. Our happiness shines so bright it could lead the way for another voyeur. Maybe they will be as moved as I am. My mind was out of orbit. The screech of sneakers brought me down to Earth.

“Stella, where did you go? Your mother just sent me another text. She needs some shredded cheese for dinner.”

“Sorry, Dad. Aren’t they a cute couple?”

My father sneers, “It’s an underwear advertisement. Get your head out of the gutter.”

Crashing down to Earth, I try to blink the star dust from my eyes. The embers never fade.



HAWTHORN

by Hayden Thorn

She always loved this hawthorn bush. It was the main reason she fell in love with the house. We started trying to have a baby and the apartment we were in would not have been enough room. We got the house for a steal (since it was a bit run down) and pounced on the investment opportunity of a fixer-upper.

We kept trying for a baby to no avail. The fertilization treatments desecrated her mentally. She was taking preponderant dosages at night or when I was at work. The amplitude of hormones within her made her despondent and removed; she would just sit by the hawthorn bush all day.

Months of stress and her copious amounts of treatments put a strain on our marriage. We became bodies coexisting between four walls. Only a year passed since we moved in though it felt like an eternity. I started having an affair and soon decided to leave her. She seemed solemn when I came home with divorce papers and signed them willingly.

I stayed one last night to pack my things. I awoke the next morning to a frigid burst of air from the back door. I found her perched next to her beloved hawthorn with slit wrists and a picture of an ultra sound taken three months ago.



MR. JONES' SPECIAL DAY

by Hayden Thorn

Everyone is here! Now it can really begin. Little Judy's mom, and young Billy's dad, everyone! They kept their promises. Seeing their faces brings me warmth I have not felt in a while. They're sitting there watching, waiting with anticipation.

"We should give them what they came for!" I exclaim with a smile. The man next to me doesn't know how to joke because he is looking at me with a mean face. A green light comes on, I think it is starting! My friends on the other side of the glass are tense; they've waited for this for a long time.

The mean man next to me asks, "Do you have any last words Mr. Jones?"

I look at my friend's faces, "I had a wonderful time playing with your kids; we had a lot of fun! I'm sorry they couldn't be here today." I hear a loud crack and my electrocution begins.



A HEART'S CALL

by Bailey Neff

For three months now, Teresa and Clark have been like a nomadic tribe with twenty others on a venture to capture a group called “Red Patched”. This group of antagonists are a part of Muslim clans associated with the guerilla warfare among Central Africa. Religious uprisings between Muslims, Christians, and tribal communities thrive in this area. The “Red Patched” kills and sells elephant tusks in black markets for ammunition to invade more communities and linger in power in others. Among the crew of twenty are trained zoologists, forest rangers, and retired American Navy Seals.

Teresa is the only female on this trek, a lioness among her pride of lions protecting her cubs, these precious elephants. The team had come across almost abandoned and flattened villages with war horrors along the way learning about slaughtered adults and their children captured and recruited to become like their new violent leaders. Teresa had enlightened Clark on the matter of the elephants before they married, and shortly after their honeymoon, they formed a group to catch these poachers through the African-American Embassy. The family units that wild herds share are what drew her to this cause, for the sake of infant elephants losing their mothers and fathers to face their parents’ same fate once they reached maturity.

“Rise and shine, bokkie.” Clark whispers to Teresa waking her. She loves when he calls her bokkie, a South African term of endearment, something Clark has called her ever since he gazed into her longing brown eyes and professed his love, almost a decade ago. “I brought you a cup of coffee, you got lucky. It was the last of the brew.” He hands her the cup, brushes her matted dark hair

out of her face, and kisses her on the lips. She notices he is already dressed in their uniform, and his short blonde hair is slicked back with gel, parted to the right, the way she likes.

“Wonderful darling, thank you.” Teresa smiles and sips the thick black tar they have been calling coffee. The overbearing smell alone can awaken the five senses. Clark is packing up his suitcase and rolling up the mosquito net that they drape around their sleeping bag pallet every night.

“I can smell the victory up ahead. Can’t you Clark?” Teresa questions looking over her shoulder smiling at her teammate and beloved. She is folding up the blankets they had used, placing them strategically in a brown medium sized bag, last night was the coldest it had ever been.

“Yes, I can almost taste it, it is so strong. Or maybe it’s that coffee filling the tent.” Clark chuckles, he winks one of his emerald blue eyes at her and lights a loose draw he plucked from a crew-member on his way back to the tent with Theresa’s tar.

She is changing into her uniform, a khaki ensemble with a bright yellow patch on the chest, identical to the getup Clark is wearing; her smile fades.

“I wish you wouldn’t do that now. It’s polluting my excitement. Besides, you said you were going to quit.” She pouts.

“It’s easy to quit something you’ve never started.” Clark smirks; taking a dramatic drag, he tilts his head back and blows a puff of smoke, it fills the temporary space competing with the smell of the now cold coffee.

“Now you’re polluting everything.” Teresa opens the flap of the tent door and ties it back so they can get their belongings to the car, also to fan out the cloud coming from Clark and his slim burning stick. She thinks to herself she loves him today. “Grab

some bags please and take them to the jeep. I do not want everything smelling like a pub.”

The pair met on an internship at Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, a zoo in India, nine and a half years ago. It was Clark’s stern voice, or maybe his South African accent, that drew her to him. Teresa loved to watch the way he handled the animals with care when they were injured or being fed. He grew up in Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, born into a wealthy and respected family that owned a chain of banks all along the southern region of Africa. She was glad to have him as her companion.

Teresa was an orphaned child; her parents were shot and killed in a random sidewalk robbery. Shortly after the incident, a distant relative adopted her. She worked all throughout high school and college at a wildlife refuge that had given her the opportunity to visit India located outside of Kentucky, USA where she once called home.

She steps outside into the hustle and bustle of the team packing their belongings; like the rising sun on the vast African savanna, the hopes of Teresa beam through her binoculars. Silhouettes of elephants dance in the distance against the brightly painted horizon. She feels a shifting of some sort, a change in the wind maybe; whatever it is, she knows the “Red Patched” are within reach. The bumpy terrain used to make her nauseous when she rode in the jeep. She was in it so much now it was somewhat soothing. She helps Clark tear down and roll up their tent; they hop into the jeep for the day’s unknown adventure up ahead.

Clark is staring out the window and watching a black and white striped new colt feeding from its identical patterned mother’s milk pouch as they pass. He looks toward Teresa; the sun just finished rising, lighting the bright blue sky, highlighting her freckled skin.

"I have been thinking, love," Clark speaks over the vehicle motor to his wife sitting in the seat beside him, "even if we catch these poachers, as long as elephants live, the demand for ivory will always be. Who knows how long this will actually take. Do you really want to live in a tent for the rest of your life?"

Teresa knows Clark has been getting frustrated the past few months. She cannot give up on these elephants though. They need a voice, her voice; someone who understands the pain of loss and abandonment, Clark, the poor devil, really doesn't know anything about that other than sacrificing his comfort zone of luxury for temporary means. Teresa knows her husband means well, but his heart cannot fully comprehend her passion unless he tastes the spark for himself.

"You can leave whenever you feel like ready." Teresa debates, I know in my heart there is still work for me to do."

"I would like to settle down sometime, and create a human family of our own. Little sponges we can teach what we know and love what we love. Don't you want that? To love a human as much as you love these elephants?" Clark questions.

"One day, Clark, today is not the day. We still have years to go, we aren't dead yet." Teresa does not want to talk about this now, so she doesn't.

Instead she places her binoculars in front of her gaze, to see what the elephants are up to. At once, her heart starts to beat chaotically as she catches a glimpse up ahead of two images that emerge from what seems like a mirage, running side by side with a distinct red patch on their sleeves, disappearing into the tall grass. She pulls herself off the seat and presses her face onto the windshield. Putting her hand on the steering wheel, she tells the driver to stop. Falling back into the seat, she motions their practiced

queue to get prepared. Six team members jump out of the roadster and hurry to the vehicle behind them motioning to get their weapons and minds in place.

Teresa hears shots fired, hitting the first car, and other random places, the sound echoing past her. Clark crouches down and peeks around the back of the second cab. He pulls his wedding ring into his pocket to get a better grip on his now beloved weapon.

"This is what we came for! No matter what happens, stay hidden, stay here!" Clark demands.

"I did not ask you to come here to fight *for* me or these elephants." Teresa demands back, "That's *my* job."

She ignores the streams of vengeance on her face and starts in a military crawl, past the cab with the rest, towards the tall unknown. Bullets dart past her striking the ground and a couple of team members. She rolls into the giant yellow stalks. Clark is still in the road a few feet behind her, he then disappears from her sight.

The grass is now her only covering, and a gun her only source of life. She creeps through the jungle of terror for what seems like eternity; then she hears the grass rustling a few feet away. She stops to lie still on her stomach. A scene like a movie of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane flashes through her brain; he experienced such anguish for his upcoming fate he sweated blood from his brow. As if she could relate, her gun slips in the drench of her quaking palms as she tries to fire the trigger, it goes off when it lands in the dirt.

She hears a wail that sounds like a child. Moving the grass wall of mystery, she sees a young male, a gun by his side and his left shoulder demolished. Blood and flesh were everywhere; as Teresa yells for help, she kneels down at the boy's side, and shoves his gun

out of the way so he cannot try anything. He spits in her face as she gets close, mainly red muck. He proceeds to choke losing blood steadily.

Teresa pulls her khaki over-shirt off to put pressure on his wound, leaving a black tank top that exposes more of her fair skin and freckles in the blazing sun. Clark runs through the grass, gun-ready, his whole being drenched in sweat and covered in dirt. He stares at the boy and Teresa, his eyes wide with uneasiness.

“Not a hospital for miles, he will never make it, look at the poor animal.” Clark speaks in a new tone of voice that makes Teresa’s spine quiver. “I shot the other, he was young as well, no older than thirteen. The tribes were right; these rebels have trained these kids to become savages.”

“We have to do something; he is too young, too innocent.” She yelps.

Her back starts to jolt up and down; he can hear nurturing whispers flowing from Teresa to the child. Clark leans down, puts his hand on his wife’s shoulder moving her out of the way, his jawbones tighten lifting his weapon. Teresa lets out a plea for mercy, glaring at the beast she once knew. The thumping in her chest is so obnoxious she cannot control her breathing. She grabs the nearest thing in sight. The thumping grows louder, Louder, LOUDER... BOOM! This time, the noise is not her pumping machine; it is the metal she is holding in both hands. As her husband falls to the ground grasping his punctured calve, she scoops up the injured boy and dashes to the nearest vehicle.

Arriving at the jeep, she drowns out the sound of the remnant of crewmembers barking remarks at her, as they tend to each other’s wounds and friends’ limp bodies. She loads the child into the backseat. Climbing into the driver’s station, she punches the

gas pedal. Looking in the rearview mirror her husband is crawling into the road towards the new chaos. She faintly hears Clark tremor her name in disbelief of what just occurred in the brush. She tilts her head forward, towards her new calling.



THE ONE

by Jessica Hall

Mornings have always been the best part of his day knowing he'll wake up to see his beloved every time, her dark green eyes the kindle for his soul. Fifty decades of kindle well spent with his wife, and after all these years he is still infatuated with her. He remembers their wedding day, the birth of their children, their battles and victories, their laughter and love; their life together. He looks into those familiar, earthy spheres that have been aged with joy and time and the longer he peers into them the younger her skin becomes. Suddenly, youth returns to him. Still gazing at the warm green pools across the room, his friend nudges him, "So are you going to ask her out or just keep staring at her?"



AMITY AT ITS BEST

by Jessica Hall

Here goes nothing. As many times as she had stood here before, inches away from a sea of faces casually awaiting the next talent to appear, Eva wishes she could be at home with her books and cats. She fiddles with her clammy hands and fidgets in her uncomfortable heels like never before. Maybe it is the fact that the majority of the 1,500 bodies in the auditorium attend the same school as she. This, for Eva, means that 1,497 humans with 2,994 ears and eyes (excluding any unknown casualties) will all be judging her. The other three being her parents and her best friend are essential to any big moment, not to mention they're her only friends.

This reminds Eva that she is mad at her best friend, Lucy, for making her wear these damn high heels that add a whole unnecessary fifteen inches, according to her. "Well, instead of you fitting under my chin when we hug, I can fit under yours now!" Lucy snickered. She had explained to her how badly Eva needed them if she wanted to be seen, jabbing at her height again.

"What if I don't want to be seen?" Eva challenged.

"Then wear your invisible cloak, Harry Potter, the shoes will still match! Either way, you are wearing them." Rolling her eyes, Eva reluctantly took Lucy's advice and pulled the leather strapped wedges on to her tiny feet.

"I hate you." Eva redundantly announced to her friend of twelve years.

"Awe! I knew you liked them!" Truth was, she did.

Standing by the red curtain that separated her from a field of peers, she admired the treasures daintily affixed to her ankles. Eva felt like a model; you know if *Vogue* was into the whole "short and stout teapot" look. She thought about how Lucy looked in

them; tall, thin and pretty; truly a model. To boot she could pass for twenty while Eva could barely pass for fourteen. “You’re drop dead gorgeous,” Lucy always says, “So what if three of your steps equals one of mine? Or when you sit down in class your feet don’t touch the floor. You are compact and ridiculously adorable!” Lucy usually ends her encouraging words with, “Did you like that? I got it off Pinterest.” That’s how she spends her days when she isn’t eating her weight in junk food or talking Eva’s ear off.

Lucy’s motor mouth is what brought Eva to be in this position: seconds away from a single spotlight, a microphone, and piano. She had performed plenty of times before, but not like this. “Are you auditioning for the talent show this year, Lucy?” Eva asked Lucy two months earlier.

“I don’t feel like it,” she responded casually. Confused, Eva reminded her that it was their senior year. “You should be going out with a big bang, Luce.” Lucy had always been in the spotlight. It practically chose her. “Everyone knows I have been in it since freshmen year, these people have had *plenty* of big bang moments from me.” Considering she won every year except sophomore when she placed second to a classical pianist, she was right. “What about *your* ‘big bang’ moment?” Lucy asked half smirking.

“What? My big moment already happened this year.”

Sitting up in a boyish manner, Lucy looked Eva in the eyes and responded with, “Forming a *Lord of the Rings* book club, mastering the elven language and being your only member does not count. Plus I already signed you up to audition!”

She always had the gift of forcing people to do things they can only dream of.

Eva quietly shifts out of the way of the tap dancing violin player she has English with and anxiously waits to be called. She

takes deep breaths and prays to God that if anyone records her they won't turn her into a Rebecca Black parody.

Eva remembers Lucy's last words of encouragement as her name is summoned, "You know you don't have to do this. But you will have to come out of your cocoon one day, Eva. Why not today? Life is too short and so are you. So grab the audience by the balls and show them how much talent is wrapped up in this pocket-sized package! I love you."

She straightens her torso and struts on stage.

Now, feet placed in front of the mic stand, she looks out at the crowd. Only then does she begin to think, *what in the hell am I doing up here?* Then, as if to ignite Eva's flame, Lucy shouts above the waves of visages, "Kick ass, shorty! Show them how it's done!!" Oh, Lucy.

Eva realizes that she would be lost or, better yet, at home with her books and cats, without her friend. Finally, with the tension exiting the room, her nerves unravel and she lowers the mic stand to her accustomed height to speak into the microphone,

"Did you get that from Pinterest?" The tension trickles out even more as the audience bursts into laughter. Standing in her chair now, Lucy looks at Eva with all the love in the world,

"Duh! Now shine like I know you can."

Here goes nothing.



THE EARLY SUN

by Kenneth Pierson

I hit the snooze button on my alarm, not ready to get up. Sweating, I pull the sheets off of me to reduce heat. The sun begins to warm the room. The beautiful red, orange, and yellow rays dance across the ceiling. The room looks hazy and my eyes are burning as I try to focus on waking up. I hear the crackling of the sun's heart-beat as she begins to wake the earth. The roaring of the morning sky grows louder. I smell my wife's cooking as I lie there wondering what we are having. I roll onto my back and I feel her cuddling me. I look towards the alarm clock, flashing 5:46 AM. As my eyes begin to focus on the bedroom doorway, a state of fear creeps into my body. In a frenzy, I yell, "Oh shit! Honey wake up, the house is on fire!"



THE PARTY

by Chris Gonzales

“Cory, come on just get out of the car!”

I'm not going in there he thought, as he crosses his arms in defiance.

“Come on, what else were you going to do tonight?”

“I have plenty of stuff I could be doing tonight Todd!” *All he really wanted was to be at home, watching his two years of DVR'ed Judge Judy's. Along with binge watching Star Trek Voyager.* Contrary to popular belief, Afghanistan does not have a very reliable cable provider.

“Beating off and watching crappy, courtroom, reality TV isn't a plan! I refuse to let you slowly waste away in that shitty apartment. Now get out of that car and come inside!”

“Dude, these are your people, not mine. Really, I just want to go home and chill man. Besides, I haven't read any of the *New York Times* best sellers, and I couldn't care less about the Neo-Classic Art Movement, or how Salvador Dali was a genius, or any of that crap! These people are assholes!”

“So, you're saying that I'm an asshole?”

“Yes, that is exactly what I'm saying! Now take me home!”

“You know where you live, start walking bitch! I'm going inside with or without you. I'm gonna go find some pretentious, academic girl with daddy issues. There's going to be plenty of em! Come on, just come inside already, I'm sure we can find someone boring for you.”

“Fine! Fine!” Cory swings the car door open, half hoping that he would hit Todd in the process. He stands there in the light of the street lamps partially admiring his reflection, but mostly rubbing the six inch scar that runs down his cheek. *The little present*

that he received nine months and seventeen days ago.

“Don’t worry you’re still prettier than I am, and chicks dig scars.”

Cory smiled, knowing that his friend was just trying to make him feel better. *He knew that Todd was right, he had been prettier than him, nine months and eighteen days ago.* He just smiled, and followed his old friend, into the den of arm chair philosophizing, and endless streams of academics, trying to impress each other with their vaaasst vocabulary. “I hate you.” He said.

“I know. I love you too! Come on; let’s get in there before all the craft beer is gone.”

“Like that could happen.”

The party is exactly as Cory had envisioned it, *beards and scarves as far as the eye can see.* The hors d’oeuvre table consisted of; an olive tray, hummus, and some meat stuff that oddly enough tastes like bacon, *but it isn’t.*

“This is going to be a long, long night; but at least they have a baconish mystery meat.” Cory said just under his breath, as he plopped another dollop of hummus on his vintage, mid-century modern plate, or in other words: *grandma’s old dishes.* He spoke, just loud enough for a very attractive, long legged, naughty teacher type hipster to hear him.

“Oh, it can’t be that bad,” she said with a smile, and a slight wink.

She then swung her body around and walked away, but not without looking over her shoulder one more time, giving Cory another smile. Then, she rounded the corner and into another room.

Cory stood there looking in her direction a moment longer, then decide to look for a camping spot.

Wandering aimlessly around the heavily scented room, a

mix between stripper spray and patchouli oil, Cory fought through the nausea, and forced his way through the noxious smells, and finally laid claim to a high back, baby-shit green chair. *It feels like an itchy sweater and smells like Goodwill.* “God I hate hipsters,” Cory said in a whisper. Scanning the room, half looking for Todd, and also looking for the naughty school teacher, while making audible comments about the people he’s watching. As he scans the room he notices that in the couch, on the other side of the lamp is a woman staring at her phone, right next to him, listening to everything he has said.

“Oh, sorry! I didn’t see you sitting there.”

“Well I hope that you don’t have anything mean to say about me,” she said as she twisted her head around the lampshade.

Cory is stunned by her beauty, *not in a naughty teacher or super model way, but in a, friends little sitter, girl next door kind of way. Her blue eyes are like a surgeon’s scalpel cutting straight to Cory’s soul.* He makes an audible grunt as she pierces through.

Smiling with her eyes before her mouth she speaks, but Cory can’t hear her. It’s like an explosion has gone off, and now the world is muffled behind her eyes. He looks at her for a long moment before realizing that *he is not speaking.*

“O-oh sorry!” He stutters out. “I’m just not used to people, and definitely not people like these.”

“People like these!” She says in a pained tone.

“Oh, I didn’t mean anything that! I’m not talking about you, I mean!” Cory says trying to dig himself out of this massive hole.

“These are the crème de la crème of society and culture. I thought you knew,” she says in an aristocratic voice.

“Do you see that girl right there?” Pointing towards a woman wearing what looks like; Victorian era thigh high boots along

with a scarf made from a burlap sack. "Do you see her?"

"Yeah, the one with the boot?"

"Yes...She has a master's degree," saying with a venomous disdain.

"Cool! I guess." He replies.

"Guess what it's in?"

"Um..." Cory looked for a few seconds scratching his chin." Probably, like Music or Art History."

"Holy shit! Art History, how did you guess that?"

"Well I see that she is dressed like a pirate, and I figure she doesn't have a job, unless it's at a tattoo shop. Since I can't see any visible tattoos, nor piercings, that must mean that her parents are rich, because those stupid shoes probably cost \$400. So she has; expensive shoes, looks ridiculous, and is unemployed, that must mean she has a useless degree. I guessed Music, or Art History, because what Graduate Degree could be more useless."

Well I am impressed Mr. Sherlock, except you were wrong about one thing."

"Oh yeah, what's that?" Cory said with a flirtatious tone.

"Those shoes weren't \$400, they were almost a thousand."

"How do you know that?" Cory retorted.

"Because mom and dad got them for her last Christmas."

"Oh, my god, she's your sister? I'm such an asshole". He says in disgust.

"It's ok she does look like a pirate. I told her that before we left the apartment."

"And you live together." He says while cradling his face in his hands.

"No, it's really her apartment, I'm just here on leave."

"Leave! You're in the military?" Cory spoke with a little too

much doubt in his voice.

“What...Do I not look the part?” She says.

“No, it’s not that... I was just surprised. You’re so pretty, and this party. I’m so, so sorry I just assumed. Let me introduce myself. I’m Lance Corporal Cory Green, United States Marine Corp.” Saying as he stands, extending a hand.

She grins, and accepts his hand, standing and saying “I’m Lieutenant Amanda Miller, United States Navy.”

“Oh shit!” Cory says in embarrassment. “Ma’am I didn’t mean anything by what I said.”

“It’s fine, I’m getting out. So, I’m not really a Lieutenant anymore.” She says with a sad smile.

“Well, I’m not really a Lance Corporal anymore, either.” He replied with his own.

“Probably didn’t get that shaving, did you?” She says, gesturing toward the scar.

Cory turns away trying to hide his face.

“It’s ok, I’ve seen much, much worse. I was a nurse on the USS Comfort. It’s a hospital ship.” Saying with a distance in her eyes, that only those who has seen true horrors can. She reaches out and pulls him closer to her, kisses his scarred cheek, and whispers “Thank you, for all that you have given.”

Cory is thrown aback from this comment, but instead of letting him sulk away from her, she pulls him over to the couch, and sits down pulling him with her to the seat.

There, they sit for hours, talking about the horrors of war, and the adventures only a soldier knows. Cory was infatuated with her the moment he first spoke with her, but now he is thinking *it could be a lot more than that*. Hours pass by like minutes, and Cory is over flowing with a feeling he didn’t know still existed.

As the party goers started to dwindle down, or pair up, Amanda says, "I'm really hungry, and I want some real food. Roger's Diner is down the street. Wanna go?"

"Sure!" Cory says as they start to stand, "Oh what, I didn't drive."

"That's ok, I did." Amanda replies, as she starts walking away, with Cory in tow.

"Let me go find my buddy, and tell him that I'm leaving."

"Yeah, I should probably let my sister know, she'll need to find a ride."

Cory didn't want to be presumptuous, but he thought *that he was probably going to get lucky tonight.*

Then he thought about it and said "That's kind of shitty, don't you think. You know, just leaving her behind?" Not that he really cared

"Probably." She said while they bobbed and weaved through the remaining party patrons.

Amanda was looking for her sister and Cory couldn't help but look at this beautiful woman and her swaying curves.

"There she is. It looks like she is already working on getting another ride." Amanda said.

Cory looks up from Amanda's backside and notices that, Pirate girl is straddling someone on a couch in a room that Cory didn't even know existed. The room is filled with abstract paintings and photos of rusty old stuff, and one couch in the middle of the room. It looks ridiculous.

As they move closer to the couple on the lone couch, Cory realizes that he recognizes the shoes of the person being straddled.

"Todd!" He blurted out.

"Oh, hey dude!" Todd said as he leaned around pirate girl.

Pirate girl turned around, "Hello, Amanda!" She said spitting the words out.

"I just came over to tell you that you're going to need to find a ride, Cory and I are going to get some real people food."

"Sir, yes sir" Pirate girl says with a fake salute.

"Whatever Sabrina" Amanda says.

"Um... not sure what that's all about! What's up dude?" Todd says.

"Yeah, I'm gonna go grab some food over at Roger's with Amanda, I'll give you a call later. You can scoop me up then."

"I'll give you a ride home," Amanda chimed.

"Well, I guess I'll call you later then." Cory moved in past Sabrina, the pirate girl, and fist bumped Todd. "Later dude... It was nice, kind of, meeting you, Sabrina." Sabrina rolls her eyes, and turns away.

Amanda pulls Cory away and they make their way toward the front door. Walking past the crappy food table, and out the purple door. They continue walking down the walkway, toward the multitude of cars that line the street. Passed the stupid, hippy style, yard gnomes and down the sidewalk. Amanda pulls her keys out of her little purse and hits the key fob. Cory can see a little VW Passat with its lights blinking.

"Well, here she is," Amanda says, referring to her car as a female.

"Nice, car." Cory says...He is surprised at how girly of a car it is.

"Yeah well, it is what it is. My mom and dad bought her for me, when I graduated from college," she says.

"It's cool, I don't have a car. I sold mine before I went..."

Well, overseas”

Cory opens the door and gets in as Amanda walks around the car.

The sounds of metal bending and cracking can be heard. Amanda is standing at the car door smiling. Cory sees that she is becoming brighter and brighter. Then in a burst of light and glass she disappears as the window explodes in.

“What the hell!” Cory bursts out of the car and runs around. There he can see the mangled remains of the once beautiful Amanda, twisted beneath a light pole. He is stunned. He hears a series of gut wrenching screams, they are not coming from Amanda beautiful but lifeless mouth. They are coming from him. People come rushing out of the house, and porch lights start to flicker on. As people start to realize what has happened. They scream and phones start to come out, all calling for an ambulance. Cory knows this is pointless, she is dead.

Cory back peddles to the curb, “Oh my god” is all he says over and over as he sits down. People are everywhere now, milling about, chattering, and looking back at Cory. With his face in his wet hands he doesn’t realize that everything has stopped, the sounds, the people, everything is silent and still, frozen. Everything is motionless, except for one person moving through the statues of people. This person or thing moves closer to Cory. At first it looks like a man, then maybe a woman, but as it comes closer Cory can tell it is neither. Not only does it not have a distinguishable gender, but its face and hair are moving as if they are alive themselves, independent of its host, floating in space or water. Before Cory can utter a sound or run away. The being speaks.

“Would you like to try it again?” It says in an ethereal voice.

“What?” Cory says.

“Would you like to try it again?” It repeats.

“Try what again?” Cory replies, in fear.

“Would you like to try the evening over again?” It says in a deeper, more guttural tone.

“What? Like you can rewind time, or something?” Cory says, as he looks around and sees all the frozen people, the frozen world, the mangled body of that once beautiful girl. He shuts his eye, “Yes, I would like to try it over again.”

The being reaches down and touches Cory. He feels the cold touch of death, and it washes over him, the world around him fades into nothingness, and he drifts off into the void.

“Cory, come on just get out of the car!”

The Beginning



DARK ANGELS

by Ashlyn Waln

What is it about a job that sucks the soul right out of you? I wonder with a bone-tired sense of numbness. I'm like most everyone else. I do it because I don't have a choice. There are people who work to support loved ones, some to support themselves, and others to support their dream. I envision myself to be in the minority. I do my job because there is something inside me that demands it of me. A sort of nebulous voice speaking out in the silent roar of countless others, compelling me. Is that what they call destiny? If so, then destiny is cruel.

Lethargically, I survey the crowd surrounding me, watching as the amber light dances across their horrified faces. They all look alike to me. I must admit though, that I do find a sort of artistic appreciation for the dramatic shadows twisting their sincere expressions into something disturbingly theatrical. I feel very old as I once again remind myself that I have work to do. Turning my gaze in the same direction as the crowd, I stare blankly at the modest suburban house being engulfed by angry, gluttonous flames.

A heavy spirited sigh leaves me, but no one takes notice as their full concentration is riveted by the neighborhood tragedy taking place. Today I hear the call too. Sometimes my responsibilities are so overwhelming, I just want to clap my hands over my ears, curl in a ball, and ignore the whole world. As tempting a thought as it is, I can't do that. It's just not realistic. Lives are on the line and I have a duty to perform. Time is of the essence.

Gliding with practiced ease, I nimbly make my way through the crowd to the front. The cries of voices are so raucous in their lament while they compete with the devouring crackle of the fire

that my inner thoughts are almost drowned out. I make my way to the steps as every memory of the cold night's chill is consumed by the heat rolling off the burning house. Tendrils of black smoke reach out from the building and caress me in their cloying, vaporous embrace as I approach the front door and ready myself to go in and do my job. My occupation has led me into the houses of a plethora of people, from all walks of life. No matter how grand or humble a person is, when I get the call they are nothing more than a human being to me. All equal, and no amount of finery or poverty changes that. It's not like you can take it to the grave anyway, I think sardonically to myself.

I pass the front doorway and a hot rush of wind and smoke coalesce in my presence. I'm protected by the heat and smoke, but I take a second to orient myself. I notice absently that a picture of a young blonde boy is catching fire on the coffee table, and I pause a moment to watch it blacken and curl in on itself. The fire should strike fear in me, but it doesn't.

It's not bravery or compassion that motivates me. I've been doing this for so long, I'm not entirely sure if an emotion ever motivated me in the first place. It's like tempting fate as I dawdle downstairs, knowing I have people whose lives depend on me. It's just that I've played out this scenario so many times I'm deathly tired of it. It's so scripted and predictable. I truly have no empathy for people. Maybe that is why I find no fulfillment in this. It's possible if I could feel something other than total ennui, then I would already be upstairs performing my obligations. I could walk away. That gives me a disturbed chuckle as I imagine the uproar that that would cause.

My tread falls like the perfectly timed tick of a clock on the compromised staircase, but I'm paying more attention to the smoke

stains on the robin's egg blue wall paint. That is until I hear weak coughing coming from the bedroom at the end of the hall. A loud noise alerts me to the fact that a few firemen have come in after me and are searching the house. Robert begins coming up the stairs behind me and his presence puts pressure on me to pick up the pace. I hurry down the hall to the room where I heard the coughs. Robert is a few steps behind me, and I smile to myself as I remember I'm planning to visit him at his home next week.

It seems to be the master bedroom that I have just stepped into and my suspicions are confirmed when I see an older couple lying on the ground, presumably suffering from smoke inhalation. Robert has disappeared, probably giving the other rooms I passed up a quick check before moving on to the master bedroom as well.

The old man on the floor watches me with wide milky eyes, his mouth gasping like a fish. He begins choking on the polluted air and closes his eyes in pain. I ignore him and go straight to his wife. Her waxen complexion is a dead giveaway. Bending to her level I place my hands on her sternum. Her husband weakly bats at me, but his attempt comes nowhere close to affecting me. With a little pressure on her, I move my hands through her and gather her like an old friend to my chest. I guess if I could find any enjoyment in my job, it would be holding her life in my hands and protecting its precious warmth. Like a little flame herself, as I cup my hands around her to ensure no one blows her out.

I begin to walk away with her as Robert passes me, seeing as I've already dealt with the wife, he heads to the old man on the floor.

"Why?" The old man's voice wheezes out in between coughs as his hero tends to him. Robert says something to the old man, but the old man's glassy stare is fixed solely on me.

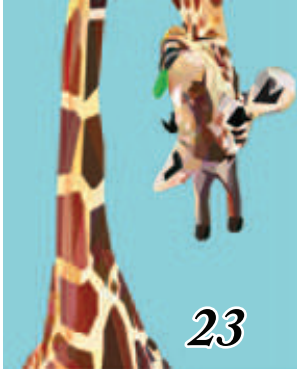
It's not the first time I've been asked this, and they always forget anyway, but just as his eyes start to roll back and his consciousness fades, with a voice that is not a voice I answer him. "Because death comes for everyone." He hears me, but he won't remember. It's the precipice of mortality that he's balanced on that allows him to perceive me at all. The old man loses consciousness next to the body of his beloved and I depart as his cherished memories become nothing more than ash.

I step back out into the night, momentarily shocked to see all the people gathered out front. I forgot they were there. I hold Marie Rose Caldwell carefully as I pass by the on lookers. A familiar face jumps out at me and I am shocked to see my twin sibling in the crowd. I don't often see her, let alone in the winter. My sister tenderly alights her hand upon a woman's abdomen before turning her sunlit gaze onto me. She approaches close to me, but maintains a safe distance to keep from touching either of us and looks down on Marie. She smiles a melancholy smile that lets me know she remembers her. Our eyes meet and my sister inclines her head. I incline mine back and she's gone. I sigh again. At least she loves her job.



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The Savoir Faire faculty advisors accept submissions of poetry, short stories, essays, and visual artwork year-round. Please visit bpcc.edu/savoirfaire to fill out a submission form, and then be sure to email the file of your work to savoirfaire@bpcc.edu. The deadline for submitting to the Spring 2016 issue is March 15th, 2016.



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